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From *City of God* to *City of Men*: The Representation of Violence in Brazilian Cinema and Television
De *Cidade de Deus* à *Cidade dos Homens*. La représentation de la violence dans le cinéma et la télévision du Brésil

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Résumé de l'article

Cet article examine la représentation de la violence dans le cinéma et la télévision du Brésil, en analysant la télésérie *Cidade dos Homens* (2003-2007), une suite au film *Cidade de Deus* (2002) présentant les mêmes acteurs, les mêmes décors et un même récit non linéaire. Le projet débute avec la production d'un épisode télé intitulé *Palace II* (2000), qui servira ensuite de base au scénario de *Cidade de Deus*. Le succès critique du film à l'échelle internationale mènera ensuite à la production de *Cidade dos Homens*. Il est dès lors important d'insister sur la relation qu'entretiennent le cinéma et la télévision, ainsi que sur leurs caractéristiques particulières, durant la renaissance de l'industrie audiovisuelle brésilienne des années 1990. La représentation de la violence est analysée non seulement dans sa façon de thématiser un problème inhérent aux *favelas* brésiliennes, mais aussi en tant que composante esthétique de la fiction télévisuelle. La représentation des opprimés est un autre aspect bien connu du cinéma brésilien depuis le manifeste de Glauber Rocha, « Esthétique de la faim » (1965), dans lequel il avance que les films doivent faire preuve de violence pour révéler véritablement la pauvreté. Le principal enjeu, toutefois, sera de déterminer si la représentation de la violence dans cette série exprime, critique ou questionne ce qui se passe réellement dans les *favelas* brésiliennes ou si elle n'offre qu'un regard esthétisé sur la pauvreté, pour le simple plaisir du public brésilien et étranger.

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From *City of God* to *City of Men*: The Representation of Violence in Brazilian Cinema and Television

Gabriela Borges

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the representation of violence in Brazilian cinema and television through analysis of the TV series *City of Men* (2003-7), which is a follow-up to the film *City of God* (2002), with the same actors, sets and non-linear narrative. The project began with the production of the TV episode *Palace II* (2000), which was developed into *City of God*'s script. After receiving international acclaim, it resulted in the production of *City of Men*. In this context, it is important to emphasise the relationship between cinema and television and their particular features as products of the Brazilian audiovisual industry's renaissance in the 1990s. The representation of violence is analysed not only as a thematic issue common to Brazilian favelas but also as an aesthetic element of TV drama. The representation of the oppressed has been well known in Brazilian cinema since Glauber Rocha's manifesto "Aesthetics of Hunger" (1965), in which he argues that films need to be aggressive in order to truly expose poverty. The main point to be addressed, however, is whether the representation of violence in this series conveys, criticises or reflects about what is really happening in Brazilian favelas or if it merely offers an aesthetic look into poverty for the delight of audiences in Brazil and abroad.

Introduction

During the 1990s, the relationship between Brazilian cinema and television went through significant changes due to the renaissance of the audiovisual industry in the country. Many audiovisual products began to be produced in both television and cinema sectors targeting domestic and foreign audiences. In order to occupy a niche in the market, Brazil's largest television company, Rede Globo, started to produce series and miniseries that were later adapted to cinema.[1] One of the main production

teams responsible for these productions was Núcleo Guel Arraes, which began to produce unique television programs during the 1980s and became an example of experimentation and innovation in Brazilian television in the following years.

This paper focuses on the analysis of episodes from the first three seasons of the TV series *City of Men* (*Cidade dos Homens*, 2002-5) that was originally created during the filming of the *City of God* footage. Rede Globo's program director Guel Arraes invited Fernando Meirelles, the director of *City of God* (2002), to create an episode for the TV program *Brava Gente*, which produced and broadcast adaptations of literary and theatrical texts. The project began with the production of the TV episode *Palace II* (2000), which was developed into *City of God*'s script. The episode *Palace II* was adapted by Bráulio Mantovani from a chapter of Paulo Lins' book *City of God* and was directed by Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund. The episode was a result of an actors' workshop developed by the group *Nós do Morro* and the NGO *Nós do Cinema* for teenagers from different favelas in Rio de Janeiro.

After the success of *City of God* in film festivals around the world, the series *City of Men* was produced by the independent production company O2 Films in partnership with Rede Globo and was released in 2002. It is a follow-up to the film, using the same non-professional actors, settings, non-linear narrative and production team, which cheerfully narrates the life of the teenagers Acerola and Laranjinha, who live in a favela in Rio de Janeiro. The difference between the film and the television series is that *City of God* is a drama about Rio de Janeiro's drug dealers using the community as a background, whereas *City of Men* is a comedy about the community with drug dealers in the background.[2]

Four seasons of the series were produced and a film inspired by them was released in 2007. Both dwelt on the friendship between Laranjinha and Acerola, a friendship at risk due to the trafficking of drugs. *City of Men* won the Grand Prize of the Critics from the Associação Paulista de Críticos de Arte (São Paulo Association of Art Critics) in 2002, the ABC Cinematography Award for Best Cinematography in 2003 and the

Geneva International Festival of Cinema and Television in the television category in 2004. The series was sold to more than 25 countries and Douglas Silva (Acerola) was nominated for an International Emmy in the Best Actor category in 2005.[3]

The first season featured four 30-minute episodes that present the 14-year-old protagonists Laranjinha and Acerola in four independent stories: *Coroa do Imperador* (The Emperor's Crown), *O cunhado do cara* (The Guy's Brother-in-Law), *Uólace e João Vítor* (Uólace and João Vitor) and *Correio* (The Mail). The 2003 season released five 30-minute episodes in which the two characters, now aged 15, experience common adolescent conflicts: their first job, their relationship with the opposite sex, the discovery of sexuality, the search for self-esteem and a sense of self-identity, and the experience of night life. The episodes are *Sábado* (Saturday), *Ordinários* (Ordinary People), *Tem que ser agora* (It Has to Be Now), *Dois para Brasília* (Two for Brasilia) and *Buraco Quente* (Hot Hole).

In the 2004 season, which comprises five 30-minute episodes and addresses serious issues such as paternity and the role of family in the community, the protagonists are 16 years old. The episodes are *A Estréia* (The First Time), *Foi sem querer* (I Didn't Mean It), *Vacilo é um só* (You Only Mess up Once), *Hip Sampa Hop* and *Pais e filhos* (Parents and Children). The 2005 season deals with the issues of violence and conflicts in the favela, difficulties in finding a job and insecurities related to the future. It includes five episodes: *A Fila* (The Line), *Tá sobrando mês* (Too Many Days in a Month), *Atração Fatal* (Fatal Attraction), *As aparências enganam* (Appearances Can Be Deceiving) and *Em algum lugar do futuro* (Somewhere in the Future).

In this article I will discuss the role that quality television drama programs can play in order to reflect, criticize, depict and deal with the current repercussion of urban violence in Brazil. The representation of poverty and violence on television has been done in programs that are sensationalist and show violent and banal images in live broadcasts of day-to-day crimes and violations of the law in the favelas and poor suburbs of major Brazilian cities. TV news and documentaries, as well as reality shows, denounce crimes but at the same time represent this

reality in grotesque forms as a way to attract viewers' attention. In the meantime, these forms of representation fail either to challenge or to change reality and present a stereotyped view of poverty. In other words, television broadcasts a representation of favela violence that perpetuates a vision of poverty-stricken people as objects of commiseration, never as subjects in their own social reality.

At the same time, I will emphasize that *City of Men* displaces the focus on the spectacle of violence and provides a non-stereotypical view of lives in Rio de Janeiro's favelas through the eyes of two teenagers who have to deal not only with their own adolescent issues but also with violence and drug trafficking on a daily basis.

Brazilian Quality Television Drama Programs

In scholarly Brazilian circles, the discussion of quality television was initiated by Machado (2000) in a seminal article entitled "Televisão: a questão do repertório" (Television: The Question of Repertoire) reproduced in the book *Discursos e Práticas de Qualidade na Televisão* (The Discourse and Practice of Quality on Television) (Borges and Reia-Baptista 2008), a volume which adds to this discussion and promotes debate between Latin American and European academics. In his article, Machado reframes the question of quality on television and calls our attention to the importance of television as an aesthetic medium like many others, such as cinema, literature and theatre, proposing a repertoire of creative works produced for the small screen. With the purpose of replying to this call, La Ferla (2008) proposes a repertoire of Argentinean programs that explore the medium's creative potential.

Many other authors collaborated on the book, providing an overview of the question of quality in the discourses and practices of TV. It is worth highlighting, for the purpose of this article, the importance given to the analysis of drama programs in the book. Machado (2000) argues that one cannot criticize television without analysing the programs which, in the first instance, make the medium. In this sense, the articles written by Machado and Velez (2008), Andacht (2008), Fechine (2008),

Virino (2008) and Knox (2008) provide a wide range of readings on the analysis of quality TV drama series.

Within English-speaking academia, many authors have worked with this theme. The debate in the United Kingdom began in the 1980s and involved many commentators aiming to define strategies to regulate the market and preserve the social responsibility of television. The BBC has been recognized as a benchmark for the production of quality drama programs since its creation, as argued by Brandt (1981, 1993), Caughie (2000), Jacobs (2000), Cooke (2003) and Borges (2009). More recently, due to the proliferation of U.S. television series and their competition with British series in national and international markets, the debate has heightened, with contributions from many authors, such as Jancovich and Lyons (2003), Creeber (2004, 2004a), Hammond and Mazdon (2005), Nelson (2007) and Akass and McCabe (2007).

Regarding Brazilian television, Fechine and Figueroa (2008) have carried out remarkable work within the Culture and Contemporary Media Research Group on the audiovisual products developed by the *Núcleo Guel Arraes* at Rede Globo. Since its early years, Rede Globo has appropriated the discourse of quality in the Brazilian broadcasting landscape in order to distinguish itself from other television channels. It built and disseminated what is known as the "Padrão Globo de qualidade" (Globo quality standard), which is associated with

> technical excellence in broadcasting (signal reception, coverage, image definition, etc.), entrepreneurial success (the best infrastructure, latest-generation equipment, highest salaries and best ratings) and technical and aesthetic professionalism (daring visual programming, setting and costumes as in Hollywood industry, use of special effects, investment in national storytelling with renowned actors, etc.) (Fechine 2008, p. 223).

The author emphasizes that currently the concept of quality is focused on broadcasting drama programs that are intrinsically related to national identity, social responsibility, commitment to democracy and cultural pluralism, as well as to the renewal of television formats.

One of the most successful production teams that meet the ethical and aesthetic demands of the "Globo quality standard" is the *Núcleo Guel Arraes*, created in 1991. It has contributed to consolidating an audiovisual output that offers, at the same time, technical and aesthetic quality and popular appeal. This production team has also been responsible for the first partnerships with independent production companies and pioneered integrating cinema and television in the Brazilian market.

Guel Arraes, who worked with French director Jean Rouch, produced important works for Brazilian television even before the creation of Núcleo Guel Arraes. During the 1980s he produced, in association with directors and screenwriters from the independent video movement, marginal cinema and alternative theatre of the 1970s, programs such as *Armação Ilimitada* (Unlimited Plotting) (1985-88) and *TV Pirata* (Pirate TV) (1989-90). In the 1990s Núcleo produced programs such as *Programa Legal* (Nice Program) (1991-93),[4] *Brasil Legal* (Nice Brazil) (1995-97), *Comédia da Vida Privada* (Comedy of Private Life) (1995-99) and *Muvuca* (Cultural Melting Pot) (1998-2000).

At the turn of the century, Núcleo Guel Arraes produced series and mini-series with original scripts and adaptations of literary and theatrical texts which were later adapted to cinema in co-productions between Globo Filmes and independent production companies. In the case of original scripts, the main productions are the series *Os Normais* (Regular People) (2001-3), which narrates the hilarious life of a couple in their thirties, adapted to cinema under the title *Os Normais—O Filme* (Regular People—The Film) in 2004. They also produced the mini-series *Invenção do Brasil* (The Invention of Brazil) (2000), which narrates the arrival of the Portuguese in Brazil. It was produced during the celebration of Brazil's 500th anniversary in 2000. Due to its great success, it was adapted to cinema with the title *Caramuru—A Invenção do Brasil* (Caramuru—The Invention of Brazil). Fechine (2008, p. 224) points out that the films resulting from these productions were heavily criticized because they were not seen as technically or formally innovative and because they reproduced television language on the big

screen. Guel Arraes replies to these critics by reasserting the importance of television for the rebirth of Brazilian cinema: "Maybe, sometimes, it is more important to make popular cinema and avant-garde television" (quoted in Fechine 2008, p. 224).

In terms of adaptations, Núcleo Guel Arraes produced the mini-series *Auto da Compadecida* (A Dog's Will) (1999), an adaptation of the homonymous play by Ariano Suassuna, adapted to cinema in 2000 following great critical and popular success. Also, three chronicles written by the playwright Nelson Rodrigues, *O primeiro pecado* (The First Sin), *Diabólica* (Diabolical) and *Cachorro* (Dog), were adapted to cinema under the title *Traição* (Betrayal) (1997), and in 2002 to television for the program *Brava Gente* (Wild People) (2000-3).

Outstanding academic works have been written on the analysis of these series and mini-series and also on the relationship between cinema and television. Discussing the differences between both media in his analysis of *Auto da Compadecida* (A Dog's Will), Pucci (2005, p. 82) affirms that differences are related to exhibition, reception and medium but not language, as all audiovisual products are created with the same tools. If one has to point out differences, it should not be between languages, but between arts and media. Figuerôa analyses the *Auto da Compadecida* (A Dog's Will) and *Caramuru—A Invenção do Brasil* (Caramuru—The Invention of Brazil) series and films and states that, on one hand, the use of digital technology hinders the separation between both languages but, on the other hand, it highlights inherent interferences in production and reception processes that have implications for the means of expression of both audiovisual products.[5]

In fact, Guel Arraes and his team have produced series and mini-series that stood out in Rede Globo's audiovisual landscape. They reflect upon and criticize television language and its intertextuality with other media, present a dialogue amongst television, cinema and advertising aesthetics, explore intelligent humour and parody, and bring a different viewpoint to important issues that permeate Brazilian society. Another aspect to highlight is the experimentation of new television formats and

storytelling deriving from an indistinctiveness between fiction and non-fiction, the documentary register and drama. In addition, Fechine (2008, pp. 228-29) calls our attention to the importance of reinterpreting social reality and cultural production from popular, peripheral and unofficial perspectives.

Brazilian Cinema and the Representation of Poverty

In the last fifteen years, Brazilian audiovisual products such as television series, mini-series, films and even advertising campaigns, present a clear dialogue amongst television, cinema and advertising languages. This dialogue can be perceived in terms of audiovisual language, as there is an aesthetic overlap amongst different media, and also in commercial terms due to the requirements of the overall audiovisual market. This aesthetic overlap is due to the fact that many cinema professionals began working for television and advertising agencies in the 1990s, when Fernando Collor's government dismantled Embrafilme and its system of financial subsidies. The skills acquired in the advertising industry, which is highly developed in Brazil, were explored and experimented with in television and cinema.

The films produced during the period known as the renaissance of Brazilian cinema (from 1994/95 to 2002) were a result of the financial subsidies provided by the audiovisual law.[6] In general terms, the films of this period use aesthetic elements of television and advertising languages; are co-productions between cinema, television and independent production companies; promote a dialogue between fictional and non-fictional narrative elements; and deal with themes related to violence, mainly urban but also in the hinterlands. The use of social problems as a theme in films and television drama programs increased with the social crisis and consequent growth of poverty and urban violence in Brazil in the 1990s. Oricchio (2003, p. 229) refers to films that exist between the languages of cinema, television and advertising, deal with social and political issues and are also open to dialogue with Hollywood cinema as "impure cinema."

Many film productions—fictions and documentaries—present the favela as background. These include *Um Céu de Estrelas*

(A Starry Sky) (1996), by Tata Amaral, *Como Nascem os Anjos* (How Angels are Born) (1996), by Murilo Salles, *Cronicamente Inviável* (Chronically Unfeasible) (2000), by Sérgio Bianchi, *O Invasor* (The Invader) (2001), by Beto Brant, *Ônibus 174* (Bus 174) (2002), by José Padilha, and *Cidade de Deus* (City of God) (2002), by Fernando Meirelles; and also the documentaries *Notícias de uma Guerra Particular* (News from a Personal War) (2003), by João Moreira Salles and Kátia Lund, and *Santo Forte* (The Mighty Spirit) (1999), by Eduardo Coutinho. On the other hand, *Guerra de Canudos* (The Battle of Canudos) (1997), by Sergio Rezende, *Baile Perfumado* (Perfumed Ball) (1996), by Lirio Ferreira and Paulo Caldas, and *Central do Brasil* (Central Station) (1998), by Walter Salles[7] are set in the hinterlands.

Colucci (2009) analyses the relationship between documentaries from this period and urban violence in the films *Notícias de uma Guerra Particular* (News from a Personal War) (1999), *O Rap do Pequeno Príncipe contra as Almas Sebosas* (The Little Prince's Rap Against the Wicked Souls) (2000), *Ônibus 174* (Bus 174) and *O Prisioneiro da Grade de Ferro* (Prisoner of the Iron Bars) (2004). She emphasizes the Brazilian historical and social contexts that play an important role in the elaboration of an artistic and also critical discourse about violence and analyses passages between images from different media (film, video and photography) as a dialogue between cinema and television languages and also as an intent to renovate film language through the incorporation of fictional cinema procedures into documentary. She also claims that these films can be analyzed as an audiovisual ethnography of urban violence in Brazil in this period as they were produced as an ethnographic observation "centered in the construction of a shared look that results from the interaction and the confrontation between distinct cultural worlds" (Barbosa and Cunha, quoted in Colucci 2009, p. 5). In the same manner, Ismail Xavier (in Conti 2000) claims that documentary films incorporate different views on the social structures and give voice to different social subjects, turning them into a "discrete ethnography."

The depiction of extreme poverty and oppression has always been on the agenda of Brazilian cinema. In the 1960s, hinterlands, favelas and suburbs were the main settings of many

Brazilian Cinema Nôvo films, which showed "another" Brazil, one that was not shown by the mainstream media. The great leader of Brazilian Cinema Nôvo was Glauber Rocha, who affirmed in his "Uma Estética da Fome" ("An Aesthetic of Hunger") manifesto, written in 1965, that the cinema needs to be aggressive in order to truly expose extreme poverty.[8]

In his manifesto, Rocha shows the impotence of Brazil in the face of colonialism, demonstrating that the country had changed hands from one colonizer to another and criticizing the paternalism of developed countries towards Latin America. Rocha is interested in showing suffering without folklore, paternalism or resigned humanism. He argues that Latin America's hunger is not only an alarming system; it represents the very nerve of society.

> Here lies the tragic originality of *Cinema Nôvo* for world cinema: our originality is our hunger, and our greatest woe is that, because it is felt, this hunger is not understood. From *Aruanda* to *Vidas Secas*, *Cinema Nôvo* narrated, described, poeticized, discoursed, analyzed. It aroused the themes of hunger: characters eating dirt, characters eating roots, characters stealing to eat, characters killing to eat, characters fleeing to eat, dirty, ugly, starving characters living in dirty, ugly, dark houses.[9]

One of Rocha's main arguments concerns the representation of extreme poverty in a revolutionary form in order to take the audience out of their inertia. To fulfill this imperative Rocha created an "aesthetic of violence," which presents unbearable images in order to destroy clichés about poverty and to contradict audiences' expectations. In this sense, it is important to emphasize that Rocha is defending an aesthetic of violence and not the aestheticized violence that we are used to watching on television or in Hollywood films.

Brazilian researcher Ivana Bentes (2001) raises issues about the "renaissance" films in relation to Rocha's manifesto. She maintains that these films are promoting what she calls a "cosmetics of hunger" and not an aesthetic of hunger and, for this reason, that they do not create a dialogue with the principal questions posed by Cinema Nôvo. In her opinion, Brazilian cinema has not matured in the course of its own history and has

vulgarized the representation of misery and violence using television and advertising techniques. Bentes affirms that Rocha removed himself from critical realism and classical narrative to create a kind of aesthetic apocalypse and to shake the audience from its lethargy. In comparison, she also claims that films produced in Brazil during the Renaissance lack political perspective and aesthetic experimentation.

Bentes' opinion was very controversial and opened up a debate among producers, critics and academics. The release of *City of God* in 2002, which for many reasons became a benchmark in Brazilian cinema, triggered a heated debate. This discussion extended to television drama programs and reached the series *City of Men*.

City of God is based on facts and adapted from the homonymous book by Paulo Lins, who lived for 20 years where the film is set. It narrates the story of the residents of the "City of God" favela since its creation in the 1960s from the viewpoint of its main character, Buscapé. Buscapé recalls the past to build the narrative and give his own account of the dilemmas experienced by the community, controlled by drug traffickers and trafficking. He tells his own story intermingled with the lives of secondary characters, Zé Pequeno, Dadinho, Bené, Cenoura, Cabeleira and Mané Galinha. In this sense, the film depicts the poverty and violence experienced by children and teenagers who live excluded from the consumer society.

Despite using non-professional actors and being based on facts, the film's narrative depicts the violence and exclusion experienced by the residents of the community through techniques that envision violent cruelty as an amazing spectacle. Guns, drugs, robberies and murders are the elements that permeate the narrative and build a very negative viewpoint of favela life. On the other hand, the depiction of the violence experienced by the teenagers in *City of Men* is of another order, as they suffer the effects of poverty and exclusion as well as drug trafficking and violence, but the viewpoint is much more positive and human than in *City of God*. *City of God* represents a dead end and a hopeless world, while *City of Men* shows that there is hope, despite the difficulties.

Television and the Representation of Violence:
An Analysis of *City of Men*

Although television critics criticized the aesthetic quality of Brazilian films which originated in television drama programs, the adaptations of literary and theatrical texts for series and mini-series broadcast by Rede Globo were, nonetheless, recognized as quality products. In the case of *City of Men*, authors have expressed contradictory opinions; television critics such as Bucci (2002, quoted in Andacht 2008, p. 243) have highlighted its diminishment compared to *City of God*, while Luis Carlos Merten has emphasized the dramatic force of the characters, who have appeared in cinema (*City of God*), television (*City of Men*) and cinema again (*City of Men* film).[10] As mentioned above, Bentes (2001) also criticized the aesthetic qualities of the work. Yet, within academia, some of the qualities of the series have been highlighted by authors such as Andacht (2008), who proposes a semiotic analysis of the series, and Schwertner (2007), who provides a reading of the series' production conditions and the depiction of favelas residents and black people by the media. Taddei (2009) analyses the images and representation of Rio de Janeiro in the first episode of the series, *Coroa do Imperador* (The Emperor's Crown). Rocha (2008) examines the representation of favela residents in television narratives, combining content and genre analysis of the programs *Central da Periferia* (Suburban Train Station) (2006), *Linha Direta* (Direct Line) (2004), *Globo Repórter* (Reporter Globo) (2004) and *City of Men* (2002).

I would argue that *City of Men* was co-produced specifically for the medium and is unique in many respects in comparison with other innovative quality audiovisual products broadcast on Brazilian television. There is no doubt that the series follows the parameters of television industry production, which avails itself of ample technical, human and financial resources, depends on audience ratings and requires an agile system of production to meet the channel's quality standards. One of the series' directors, Fernando Meirelles, recalls that Rede Globo required an audience rating of 20 points in the first season in order to produce the second one. Also, footage of a 30-minute episode had to be completed in one week.[11]

In addition, series are television's main genre and, in the case of Brazilian television, rely on the visual literacy of soap opera audiences. Viewers became accustomed to identifying themselves with the characters and plots of serialized fictional programs. Yet, unlike the Brazilian soap operas that promote a standard format in which various dramatic units present a Manichean and stereotyped vision of social classes and highlight their differences, *City of Men* subverts this format and creates serialized episodes that in fact call viewers' attention precisely to this sort of vision. Andacht (2008, p. 241) describes the use of urban violence in soap operas such as *Mulheres Apaixonadas* (Women in Love) as quoting reality as they separate the fictional from the "real" world. Realist soap operas are fictions with a didactic message, the so-called social marketing practised by Rede Globo. He points out, however, that *City of Men*'s tele-realism differentiates amongst these narratives, homogeneously integrating the indexes of favela daily life, such as settings and actors, into the fictional plot.

In my view, *City of Men* brought a new element into the Brazilian audiovisual landscape and innovated in many ways, the most important consisting of its documentary characteristics. It makes use of excellent technical means to narrate a story that amazed the audience, who were not accustomed to watching the life of common people from Brazilian favelas on television. In this sense, the series provides a different understanding of Brazilian favelas and presents a viewpoint of people with families, jobs and problems similar to any other social group. The story of Acerola and Laranjinha presents a chronicle of Rio de Janeiro in which black and poor people also participate. The image of them is not stereotyped, so it does not reaffirm prejudice. The series has dramatic appeal, mainly through the use of humour, but at the same time reveals a sort of truth about life in the favela.

In spite of being a fictional story that follows its protagonists' lives for five years, *City of Men* expresses the viewpoints of favela through the accounts from which the scripts originated, which not only provide the series with authenticity but also direct viewers' attention to teenagers' dilemmas around their self-esteem in their search for a Brazilian identity. In addition,

footage of teenagers, women and favela residents in the supplementary DVD material[12] shows their awareness of their own condition and confirms that they feel their values are well represented on the screen. In fact, their way of life is part of Brazilian reality and for that reason they must not be seen as objects of commiseration.

Audiences watch the viewpoint of those who live with violence on a daily basis through a handheld camera, voice-over and settings that show the daily relationships between residents and drug dealers. The stories told are not Manichean, that is, those in which the impoverished fringe of society is always composed of criminals who are the embodiment of evil, while middle class teenagers are good people and will be successful in their lives. They present a different view of the favela. In this sense it is very different from *City of God* as it does not focus on the spectacle of violence. In addition, the series disseminates useful narratives which, according to Mepham (1990, p. 60), stimulate the democratization of society and promote the exercise of citizenship. Useful narratives also motivate the development of the personality and social life of the audience. In this sense, the series' narratives entertain and deflect attention from real life but also call viewers' attention to social and political issues.

One of the program's directors, Regina Casé,[13] calls our attention to the fact that the series is not a documentary, as the characters are performed by non-professional actors. I would argue, however, that it has a documentary nature, as all the stories are based on the teenagers' and residents' experiences. Also, episodes are produced, shot and edited using documentary techniques, including the use of a handheld camera and voice-over to show characters' accounts and viewpoints; and the use of natural lighting, direct sound and local settings to give authenticity to the narrative. Despite the fact that the actors are prepared for the performances, the dialogues are improvised and based on their own life experience in a favela. In this sense, the narrative mingles fictional and non-fictional discourses by using ethnographic techniques to prepare the actors.

Likewise, Andacht (2008, pp. 243-44) points out the importance of actors' biographies that mingle with fictional narrative

and employs the concept of documentary value elaborated by André Bazin (1985, quoted in Andacht 2008, p. 246). The fact that the actors actually lived in favelas "generates a specific effect of the real" and for this reason the facts they represent are partially true.

The main issue about audiovisual works that show the reality of favelas is that they depict an external point of view, as most of the professionals who create and produce the programs have not experienced violence in their daily lives. In this sense, the poor have no voice as social actors and are represented from an external viewpoint that conveys a way of looking and perceiving reality and imposes an authoritative discourse. In this case, it is important to bear in mind that even though audiovisual professionals produced *City of Men* episodes, the stories were based on accounts and viewpoints of those who live in various Rio de Janeiro favelas.[14] For instance, Paulo Lins affirms that the scripts for *Correio* (The Mail) and *O Cunhado do cara* (The Guy's Brother-in-Law) came from his own experience and observation of favela life.[15]

In fact, O2 Filmes and Núcleo Guel Arraes professionals worked for the industrial and commercial system but managed to produce programs that made a difference, questioning in some way what had been done on television until then. On the one hand, they used intelligent humour to captivate the public and gave visibility to the urban violence that devastates all major cities in Brazil. On the other hand, they did not ignore the human dimension of those who live in precarious conditions in those cities.

In this sense, one can argue that television accomplishes its social role by broadcasting positive images of poor peoples' lives. Wolton (1996, p. 124) suggests that television has the ability to present itself as the mirror of society, in the sense that it allows society to see itself through the representations exhibited on screen. In general, the favela is represented in Brazilian television as a place of exclusion, where there is only violence, poverty and drug trafficking while the media represent the middle and upper class neighbourhoods in a positive manner. Although portraying a fictional narrative, *City of Men* displaces our understanding of

this current representation. It shows residents' difficulties related to problems with violence and drug trafficking but also makes visible favela life and exhibits another view of teenagers' dreams, aspirations and daily activities.

The series positions itself in that tenuous frontier between fictional drama and documentary. In terms of drama, it narrates the adventures of two boys coming of age, and in terms of documentary, it is based on everyday favela life in Rio de Janeiro. In the background, the series addresses several issues that give authenticity to the narrative and generate viewers' awareness of the difficulties experienced by favela residents, mainly children and teenagers. The main issues dealt with in the series are the exposure of teenagers' critical viewpoint on violence and their awareness of the difference between the two worlds—the favela and the southern zone;[16] and teenagers' lives and dilemmas and the codes of ethics and conduct that have to be followed by favela residents. Also, at another level, the series shows the relevance of civil society organizations such as community associations and NGOs in promoting cultural and artistic activities that help children and teenagers cope with the problem of urban violence.[17]

The first season episode *Coroa do Imperador* (The Emperor's Crown) shows boys' school routines and establishes parallels between drug dealers and their army and the history of Brazilian independence, which occurred when the Portuguese royal family fled to Brazil to escape from Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of their land in the early nineteenth century. It clearly shows how day-to-day life with violence, firearms and the law of the strongest occupy children's imaginations. The images show the reality of the drug trafficking and the audio refers to Napoleon Bonaparte's history. Metaphorically, the importance the teacher gives to the emperor's crown is associated with the value of drugs in children's minds. Napoleon's soldiers are compared to drug dealers, whose hierarchy is also military; the drug chief is called a lieutenant and introduces his soldiers in the film. In this episode teenagers recall their experiences with violence. They are able to name different types of guns and recall having witnessed many murders. It also presents their thoughts on their own identities, as they state that all the boys working in drug

trafficking are respected and have some kind of power over them. On the other hand, they acknowledge that they die very young, before reaching the age of 18.

In the same episode, Acerola compares the difference between the favela and the neighbouring southern zone of Rio de Janeiro, located near the beach. The police do not protect anyone in favelas, whereas residents are protected by drug dealers on condition that they respect their code of ethics and conduct. During a parallel editing, voice-over sequence, Acerola compares the lack of safety in the southern zone, where CCTV cameras and iron railings protect houses from thieves, with the complete safety enjoyed in the favela, where there are neither cameras nor robberies. The drug dealers' code of ethics and conduct prevents robberies, assaults, quarrels and disorder.[18] Only the drug dealers can be violent in their disputes with their rivals for control of the area or in conflicts with the police. Whoever disobeys the rules is either killed or has to leave the favela. On the other hand, Acerola mentions that "playboys," who live in the southern zone, only have contact with this reality through television or when they go up there to buy drugs.

Reflecting on the same topic from a different perspective, the episode *Uólace e João Vítor* (Uólace and João Vitor) shows that teenagers from the favela and the southern zone share the same dilemmas, insecurities and concerns. Also, they are afraid of each other because they do not know the life and the way of thinking of their neighbours. However, one is not better than the other. In one sense, such stories help to deconstruct the myth, found mainly among the Brazilian middle class, that those living in favelas are criminals. Most favela residents are poor, work in the southern zone and try to live the best life they can. They respect and are on familiar terms with the drug dealers, as the police do not offer any kind of protection.

Uólace is Laranjinha's real name and João Vitor is his neighbour who lives in the southern zone beside the favela. Like Laranjinha, João Vitor was born to a single mother, who works hard to pay for his studies, and does not have money to do everything he would like to. The similarity of the boys' preconceived viewpoints is shown via the editing of images shot at a

shoe store and their interior monologues. Both boys would like to buy the most recent model of Nike runners, but, while looking at them at the shop window, Laranjinha thinks that João Vitor has two bodyguards and João Vitor thinks that Laranjinha is involved with two criminals. So, João Vitor and Laranjinha run away from one another in despair.[19]

The series also reflects on teenagers' lives and dilemmas and depicts character development through issues around sexuality, pregnancy and paternity. *Sábado* (Saturday) depicts the cultural programs available in favelas on the weekend, such as the funk balls, in which teenagers present their dance groups called "bondes." The episode highlights the discovery of sexuality by using teenagers' narration to describe their first sexual experience and to reveal the development of their self-esteem through their black identity.

Tem que ser agora (It Has to Be Now) addresses the issue of teenage pregnancy and the importance for the protagonists of not being a virgin. This episode also presents differences and affinities between favela and southern zone residents. Although from different social backgrounds, teenagers and youngsters have to negotiate their leisure space on Rio de Janeiro beaches. *A Estréia* (The First Time) depicts Laranjinha and Acerola's loss of virginity and *Foi sem querer* (I Didn't Mean It) shows the loss of teenagers' dreams when Acerola's girlfriend Cristiane, a 14-year-old teenager, discovers she is pregnant, thus requiring them to change their plans for the future, as they have to assume responsibility for their actions. Acerola needs to get his first job to sustain his child and Cristiane has to leave school, despite being one of the best students in her class. Pregnancy is a dilemma experienced by many teenagers in favelas who have to leave school and cannot work as there is no place for their children in daycare. In addition, many teenagers are sons and daughters of single mothers and have not been officially recognized by their fathers.

In *Pais e filhos* (Parents and Children), Cristiane gives birth, Acerola begins to work in a bar and Laranjinha places an ad in the newspaper looking for his father. This episode addresses the dilemma Acerola faces when he becomes a teenager father and,

unlike Laranjinha, needs to keep his job. It also deals with the difficulties experienced by Cristiane as a teenage mother.

The characters address the prejudices and difficulties favela residents face in getting a job, even if they have completed their studies and have their documents in order. In their dialogues, they confirm that black and poor people only get jobs as domestic employees and garbage collectors, as they are never seen working in different jobs. The prejudice of southern zone residents is also exposed through characters' dialogues. Although they claim that they do not hold prejudices, they do not want to share their leisure space, the beach, with favela residents. To corroborate this perspective, the study carried out by Araújo (quoted in Taddei 2009, pp. 6-7) on Brazilian soap operas and miniseries shows that black people have always been represented in Brazilian television drama in a stigmatized manner, as slaves or holding jobs that require low qualification such as waiters, babysitters, domestic employees, drivers, gardeners, etc.

City of Men also shows the hierarchical organization and institutionalization of social functions performed by drug dealers in favelas and suggests the importance of community associations by depicting their day-to-day activities. The series reveals that violence and social exclusion do not occur only in economic terms but are also based on ethical and political factors. From this perspective, exclusion is invisible not only in media representation, but also in the exercise of their social role as citizens. For this reason, community association and NGO activities are very important in this context, as they develop another perspective on life that can influence the future of children and teenagers. In fact, *City of Men* discusses more than police and drug dealers' violence and oppression in favelas. It exposes the symbolic violence experienced through discrimination and the impediment to the exercise of citizenship rights, as every citizen has the right not to be humiliated on account of their ethnic or financial background.

The episodes *Correio* (The Mail), *Buraco Quente* (Hot Hole) and *Vacilo é um só* (You Only Mess Up Once) present daily *favela* violence, the relationship between the community association and drug dealers and the rules imposed by the latter. Their code of ethics and conduct has to be respected and anyone who

disobeys it is summarily executed. *Correio* (The Mail) deals with the delivery of letters by the postman and the relationship between the community association and the drug dealers. The drug dealers manage favela life and the community association serves as an intermediary agent, trying to solve residents' problems before they ask the drug dealer chief to solve them. The two groups maintain a good relationship, but this does not mean that the community association is involved in the trafficking of drugs; the community respects the drug dealers, as they control the favela. As the postman cannot deliver letters because there are no formal addresses, he leaves them at the community association. Acerola and Laranjinha are recruited to deliver the letters so they decide to name the streets and elaborate a map in order to facilitate the postman's work. But this generates many problems, mainly because the police can get a street map and locate the houses, which makes it easier to arrest drug dealers.

In *Buraco Quente* (Hot Hole), Espeto, Laranjinha's cousin and a major drug trafficker, is betrayed and informed on to the police by a colleague. Espeto manages to flee from an ambush; the images of his escape are shot with a handheld camera with direct sound and are edited at a frenetic pace. While getting away, he gets shot and loses the bag containing the drug-trafficking money. With the help of his girlfriend Zuleide, Laranjinha and Acerola, Espeto finds the bag with the money in the forest, but he refuses to kill the betrayer. For this reason, he gets permission to leave trafficking. He looks for a job as garbage man for the city of Rio de Janeiro, but he is not accepted because he is illiterate and has no documents. As a good happy ending, Espeto has to leave the favela for some time but at least he is not involved with trafficking anymore.

In *Vacilo é um só* (You Only Mess Up Once) Laranjinha flirts with trafficking and related privileges while he is going out with Tina, who works in trafficking. Tina's father disobeys the rule that bans robberies within the favela and is made to pay for his error. In a scene of extreme violence, Tina almost kills her father, but decides that a beating is enough. The father ends up in hospital recovering for two months and Laranjinha realizes that, even with its privileges, drug trafficking is not worthwhile.

Most of the episodes make use of a classical narrative structure presenting a happy ending with a moral that suggests the difficulties lived by favela residents, mainly children and teenagers, yet they offer a different perspective that does not incriminate the characters. I cannot argue that there is an aesthetic of violence that presents unbearable images, as Glauber Rocha proposed. However, the representation of violence in *City of Men* contains aspects of what Bentes (2001) called a "cosmetics of hunger," as television is a medium that incorporates other media and their aesthetic languages. For instance, it presents fast editing; uses the resources of animation to open up windows and create visual metaphors in the narrative and shows images of video game gunshots that mingle with images of TV news. In this sense, the so-called "cosmetics of hunger" meets the standard of aesthetic quality required by Rede Globo, and these images are included in the television flow of a broadcasting system that is overloaded with violent images. On the other hand, *City of Men* promotes audience identification through the use of humour and brings a new understanding of favela life through an authentic representation of reality presented in a cheerful way. In addition, the main characters are teenagers and present their own vision of violence, which is neither ingenuous nor conditioned by media discourse.

In terms of the quality television debate, the main issue to be addressed is related to the representation of violence on television that is neither trivial nor spectacular. Bentes (2001) asks: "How [is one] to create a new mode of expression, comprehension and representation of the phenomena related to poverty, hinterland and favela, their characters and drama?" In my opinion, *City of Men* is an aesthetic proposition which makes one reflect upon various aspects of poverty and urban violence. I also believe that a new mode of expression will only be possible when media begin to show the viewpoint of those excluded from the consumer society. Although not revolutionary, as documentaries have done this sort of thing before, it is a very interesting way to give voice to those who are not usually represented by the media or are depicted in a stereotypical or deprecatory manner. Considering Brazilian television history, which is based on Rede Globo hegemony, this project is an innovative way of

telling stories that are useful in initiating debates about important issues and in changing preconceived opinions.

Brazilian television accomplishes its social role by giving access to different voices and viewpoints and by making visible the many projects that are being developed in Rio de Janeiro. Finally, the series satisfies market requirements as a creative audiovisual product that is commercially viable in national and international markets.

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Traduit du portugais par Alex Caravela

NOTES

1. The films were produced by Globo Filmes, a company created in 1998 as the cinema branch of Rede Globo whose goal was to enhance the relationship between cinema and television and to promote national culture. Information available at http://globofilmes.globo.com/GloboFilmes/0,,5363,00.html. Consulted on May 15, 2011.

2. As described by Fernando Meirelles on the DVD *Cidade dos Homens*, Núcleo Guel Arraes (prod.), Brazil, O2 Filmes, 2002-6.

3. Information available at http://cidadedoshomens.globo.com and http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0364801/awards. Consulted on May 10, 2011.

4. Fechine (2008, p. 230) contends that this program pioneered the merging of fiction and non-fiction in Brazilian television. We should note that some members of the production team, such as Regina Casé, have also worked on *City of Men*.

5. Alexandre Figuerôa, "Cinema e televisão: notícias de uma guerra particular," Proceedings of the 26th Congresso Brasileiro de Ciências da Comunicação, 2003, p. 7. http://galaxy.intercom.org.br:8180/dspace/bitstream/1904/4677/1/NP7FIGUEIROA.pdf. Consulted on May 18, 2011.

6. In the year 2002, 30 to 40 films were produced.

7. Nominated for an Academy Award in 1999.

8. Glauber Rocha, "Aesthetics of Hunger," trans. Martins Schlesinger, Tempo Glauber, http://www.tempoglauber.com.br/english/t_estetica.html. Consulted on May 20, 2009. Also available in a different translation as "An Esthetic of Hunger," trans. Randal Johnson and Burnes Hollyman, in Randal Johnson and Robert Stam, eds., *Brazilian Cinema*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 68-71.

9. This passage, found in the notes to the Portuguese version, is not available in the two different translations cited in note 8 above. The Portuguese reads: "Aí reside a trágica originalidade do Cinema Nôvo diante do cinema mundial: nossa originalidade é a nossa fome e nossa maior miséria é que esta fome, sendo sentida, não é compreendida . . . o Cinema Nôvo narrou, descreveu, poetizou, discursou, analisou, excitou os temas da fome: personagens comendo terra, personagens comendo raízes, personagens roubando para comer, personagens matando para comer, personagens

fugindo para comer, personagens sujas, feias, descarnadas, morando em casas sujas, feias, escuras . . ." Available at http://www.tempoglauber.com.br/t_estetica.html. Consulted on May 20, 2009.

10. Luis Carlos Merten, "Cidade dos Homens 1" and "Cidade dos Homens 2," August 31, 2007. Available at http://blogs.estadao.com.br/luiz-carlos-merten/2007/08/. Consulted on May 20, 2010.

11. According to the Fernando Meirelles interview included in the DVD *Cidade dos Homens*, op. cit.

12. According to the interviews included in the DVD *Cidade dos Homens*, op. cit.

13. Regina Casé, interview in the DVD *Cidade dos Homens*, op. cit.

14. One can argue, however, that *City of Men* is not as innovative as the documentary *O prisioneiro da grade de Ferro* in which the director Paulo Sacramento relinquishes the camera and asks the inmates to film the documentary from their own perspective. Colucci (2009) analyses this aspect of the film and the incorporation of different voices during the editing process, such as those of the production team, the director of photography and the director. I would argue that *City of Men* is innovative if we consider that it was produced for Brazilian television which, in general terms, usually shows trivial and stereotypical images of violence.

15. In the interview in the DVD *Cidade dos Homens*, op. cit.

16. The zone along the beach in Rio de Janeiro is called the southern zone, comprising the neighbourhoods Leblon, Ipanema, Copacabana, Arpoador and Leme. It is very close to some favelas located in the hills alongside the beach.

17. The workshops developed by Nós do Morro and Nós do Cinema were very important to the production of several works by O2 Films and Núcleo Guel Arraes in favelas in Rio, according to information available at http://editoraglobo.globo.com/especiais/2006/generosidade/reportagem_25.html. Consulted on May 17, 2011.

18. The articles by Roberto Pompeu de Toledo ("Na Rocinha, como em Falluja," *Revista Veja Online*, April 24, 2004, available at http://veja.abril.com.br/210404/pompeu.html. Consulted on May 15, 2011) and Carlos Collier ("Código de conduta," *Site Viva Favela*, April 12, 2004, available at http://acervo.vivafavela.com.br. Consulted on May 15, 2011) provide an account of the code of ethics and conduct that residents have to follow in Rio de Janeiro's favelas. Discussion of this issue became very common in Brazilian media and academic circles when confrontations between police and drug dealers increased in the 1990s and 2000s.

19. Concerning a different scene of this episode, Andacht (2008, p. 253) analyses the reciprocal injuries thought but not expressed by both boys, concluding that both are racist.

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RÉSUMÉ

De *Cidade de Deus* à *Cidade dos Homens*. La représentation de la violence dans le cinéma et la télévision du Brésil
Gabriela Borges

Cet article examine la représentation de la violence dans le cinéma et la télévision du Brésil, en analysant la télésérie *Cidade dos Homens* (2003-2007), une suite au film *Cidade de Deus* (2002) présentant les mêmes acteurs, les mêmes décors et un même récit non linéaire. Le projet débute avec la production d'un épisode télé intitulé *Palace II* (2000), qui servira ensuite de base au scénario de *Cidade de Deus*. Le succès critique du film à l'échelle internationale mènera ensuite à la production de *Cidade dos Homens*. Il est dès lors important d'insister sur la relation qu'entretiennent le cinéma et la télévision, ainsi que sur leurs caractéristiques particulières, durant la renaissance de l'industrie audiovisuelle brésilienne des années 1990. La représentation de la violence est analysée non seulement dans sa façon de thématiser un problème inhérent aux favelas brésiliennes, mais aussi en tant que composante esthétique de la fiction télévisuelle. La représentation des opprimés est un autre aspect bien connu du

cinéma brésilien depuis le manifeste de Glauber Rocha, « Esthétique de la faim » (1965), dans lequel il avance que les films doivent faire preuve de violence pour révéler véritablement la pauvreté. Le principal enjeu, toutefois, sera de déterminer si la représentation de la violence dans cette série exprime, critique ou questionne ce qui se passe réellement dans les favelas brésiliennes ou si elle n'offre qu'un regard esthétisé sur la pauvreté, pour le simple plaisir du public brésilien et étranger.